

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 1579

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL TRIP

REF: STATE 051793

1. RESPONDING TO A LETTER WHICH I SENT FRIDAY TO MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS C. CECIL DENNIS, A COPY OF WHICH I HAD
SENT TO REGINALD TOWNSEND, PRESIDENT TOLBERT ASKED ME TO
MEET WITH HIM THIS MORNING (MARCH 6) FOR A PRELIMINARY
PLANNING SESSION. HE LISTED THE LIBERIAN MEMBERS OF THE
JOINT US-GOL WORKING GROUP AND REQUESTED THAT THE GROUP MEET
TOMORROW, MARCH 7, AT 5:00 P.M. THE LIBERIAN MEMBERS OF
THE GROUP ARE AS FOLLOWS:

CHAIRMAN: MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS
E. REGINALD TOWNSEND

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS C. CECIL DENNIS, JR.

MINISTER OF FINANCE JAMES T. PHILLIPS

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS GABRIEL J. TUCKER

MINISTER OF INFORMATION, CULTURE AND TOURISM J.JENKINS PEAL
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MINISTER OF COMMERCE WILLIAM E. DENNIS, JR.

SUPERINTENDENT OF MONTERRADO COUNTY SAMUEL N. SMITH
SUPERINTENDENT OF MARSHALL TERRITORY (AREA IN WHICH
ROBERTSFIELD IS LOCATED) GEORGE MCGEE

DIRECTOR OF GENERAL SERVICES AGENCY WILBERT CLARK

CHARLES COOPER OF FIRESTONE

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WILFRED CLARKE

2. PRESIDENT TOLBERT URGED AGAIN THAT WE CONSIDER EXTENDING THE VISIT OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT BEYOND ROBERTSFIELD DURING THIS STOP IN LIBERIA. HE SAID THAT ONE OF HIS MAIN PROBLEMS IS TO PERSUADE THE YOUTH OF LIBERIA THAT LIBERIA'S "SPECIAL UNIQUE FRIENDSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE TREASURED AND MAINTAINED. HE SAID THAT IF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT MERELY STOPPED AT ROBERTSFIELD THE IMPRESSION WOULD BE LEFT THAT THE AMERICANS DO NOT TAKE SERIOUSLY THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH LIBERIA. PRESIDENT TOLBERT SAID THAT HE FULLY APPRECIATED THE RESTRICTIONS ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S TIME BUT SUGGESTED THAT THE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS AND LUNCH BE HELD AT NEARBY BENTOL CITY RATHER THAN AT ROBERTSFIELD. HE SAID THAT THE ROUND TRIP FROM ROBERTSFIELD WOULD ADD A MAXIMUM OF 90 MINUTES TO THE SCHEDULE. IT WOULD HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BRINGING THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY TO A LIBERIAN TOWN, CAPITAL OF MONSERRADO COUNTY, WHERE FACILITIES ARE SUFFICIENT TO ACCOMMODATE THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY. TOLBERT SAID THAT AT BENTOL HE WOULD HAVE THE HONOR OF RECEIVING PRESIDENT CARTER AT HIS BIRTHPLACE. (FYI: NOTE THE GOL
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HAS GIVEN UP ON MONROVIA ALTERNATIVE. BENTOL IS FAR MORE ACCESSIBLE.)

3. I REMINDED THE PRESIDENT THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL IN THIS VISIT IS FOR THE TWO PRESIDENTS TO MEET AND TO COME TO UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER. I REMINDED HIM THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS HAD ALREADY EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT COULD NOT VISIT THEM DURING THIS TRIP. I TOLD HIM THAT AN ADVANCE TEAM FROM WASHINGTON WOULD SPEND MARCH 21 IN MONROVIA AND THAT AN EXTENSION OF THE VISIT COULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THIS TEAM. I AVOIDED GIVING THE PRESIDENT ANY FALSE HOPES, REITERATING THAT OUR PRIMARY GOAL IS TO DEVELOP A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIM AND PRESIDENT CARTER.

4. I BROUGHT UP THE MATTER OF A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR THE LADIES AND FOUND THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS ALREADY ONE STEP AHEAD OF ME. HE SAID THAT THE WIVES OF THE LIBERIAN MEMBERS OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP WOULD CONSTITUTE A COMMITTEE TO PLAN ACTIVITIES FOR MRS. CARTER. I REMINDED HIM THAT THE AMERICAN FIRST LADY IS INTERESTED IN SUBSTANTIVE ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS AND PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT

THESE WOULD BE ARRANGED. HE NOTED THAT IF IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY TO GO TO BENTOL, AS HE HAD SUGGESTED, THEN THE HOME OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF MONT-SERRADO COUNTY WOULD BE RESERVED FOR USE BY THE LADIES DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL TALKS. HE SUGGESTED THAT A PROGRAM BE ARRANGED TO INCLUDE SUCH INSTITUTIONS AS THE BENTOL HOME FOR INDIGENT CHILDREN, FIRESTONE HOSPITAL AND VOA TRANSMITTER SITE, ALL ENROUTE TO BENTOL.

5. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY THE PRESIDENT FEELS THAT GETTING AWAY FROM ROBERTSFIELD IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. I BELIEVE HE IS CORRECT IN STATING THAT THE VISIT TO LIBERIA WOULD GAIN IMPACT IF IT WENT BEYOND ROBERTSFIELD. IN ANY CASE, THE PRESIDENT IS DELIGHTED THAT HE IS HAVING CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS WITH THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT. HE HAS MOBILIZED A FIRST-CLASS GROUP OF OFFICIALS FOR THE JOINT WORKING GROUP, AND I ANTICIPATE SPEEDY AND EFFICIENT HANDLING OF ALL DETAILS IN CONNECTION WITH THE VISIT. I AM NOT RPT NOT REQUESTING A RESPONSE TO THIS CABLE. IT IS BEING SENT FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. EMBASSY WILL HAVE DETAILED SCENARIOS FOR PRE-ADVANCE TEAM TO EVALUATE ON 21 MARCH AND BE PREPARED PROCEED ON EITHER VENUE. CARTER

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